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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 004319

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/AND, S/CT AND EUR/UBI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/28/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: THREE ALLEGED IRA MEMBERS ACQUITTED ON TERRORISM CHARGES

REF: A. 03 BOGOTA 3443

[B](#). 02 BOGOTA 11148

Classified By: DCM Milton K. Drucker, reason 1.4 (d).

[1](#). (U) Three Irish citizens -- Niall Connolly, Martin McCauley, and James Monaghan -- were acquitted on charges of training Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas in the use of explosives and urban terrorist tactics. The three men were, however, found guilty of entering the country using false documents and were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 26 to 44 months. Because the three men have been in prison since they were originally detained in Bogota's El Dorado airport in August 2001, the presiding judge has reduced the sentence for each to time served, a fine of 17,900,000 Colombian pesos (approximately USD 6,900 each) and expulsion from Colombia upon payment of the fine. Under Colombian law, the Office of the Prosecutor General ("Fiscalia") has the right to appeal the judge's decision. Prosecutors have announced their intention to do so. All three have been granted conditional parole pending the outcome of the appeal. They are expected to be released from prison today. Should the prosecutors' attempt to appeal the decision fail, the three will be immediately deported upon payment of the assessed fine.

[2](#). (C) Prosecutors had alleged that the three were members of the IRA and had trained FARC guerrillas in the FARC's former "despeje" in 2000 and 2001. The three denied the charges, stating that they had come to Colombia to observe peace talks then underway between the GOC and FARC. The prosecutors' case was severely weakened when two key witnesses refused to testify (ref B) and by the defense's introduction of videotapes and testimony from witnesses contradicting accounts that the three had been observed training FARC operatives in the "despeje." During the trial, prosecutors also presented evidence linking all three to the IRA.

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